

MEMORANDUM

Mayor Randall L. Woodfin's
311 BRIEFING



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Dear Birmingham Residents:

The City of Birmingham's 311 system was launched 15 years ago to better connect City departments with the communities they serve.

But, as with all things, change was soon needed. One of those changes became an initiative within the City of Birmingham's Strategic Plan.

Initiative #86

"Evaluate and move 311 to a resident-facing department to achieve greater customer service and accessibility."

To do this, we embarked on a new approach, not only in an attempt to smooth out inefficiencies in the previous system, but to better bridge the gap between community needs and City services. We began analyzing data to improve inefficiencies and solidify communication. Last November, change came in the form of the City of Birmingham's 311 Revamp System, a brand new approach to the previous 311 system that we're confident will better meet the needs of our residents.

To do this, we stayed true to these three key goals: improving user experience for residents; providing more tools for employees; and using cost-effective, updated technology to tie both worlds together.

Please explore the following briefing to learn how the new 311 system is here for you. From animal control and missed trash pickup to illegal dumping and street cleaning, this system is the fastest way to take action in your communities.

Know that our 311 operators are here for you and are dedicated to helping you find answers and resources in your time of need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Woodfin".

Randall Woodfin
Mayor



The City of Birmingham, Alabama, launched its 311 call center in 2005 to act as a liaison between citizens and City departments. The 311 call center tracks cases and works with departments to improve service.

Executive Summary

The City of Birmingham launched its 311 system, 15 years ago, to act as a liaison between the citizen and City departments. Just like with any type of system that generates data, the City realized that 311 was not a perfect indicator of what's happening on the ground; however, the data can serve as an invaluable tool in deployment of services and policy making. Recently, the City began analyzing data to identify ways to improve inefficiencies with the current customer relationship management system (CRM).

As a result of this, the City of Birmingham's 311 Revamp System initiative was launched and went live on November 15, 2019. The goal of this initiative was to improve upon the old system by engaging dedicated employees, having a willingness to become more innovative through efficient processes, and enhancing the relationship management system to better meet the needs of the citizens. To do this, the City engaged an internal team aimed to develop cost-effective recommendations and an action plan to 1) improve responsiveness 2) performance consistency 3) quality control 4) internal/external communication and 5) reporting functions.

Key Findings

311 At a Glance

The City of Birmingham, Alabama, needed a new 311 call center solution to help route and track service requests from citizens. The call center's previous system was expensive to maintain, difficult to use, and did not support how city departments worked. The City examined several solutions and selected Microsoft Dynamics CRM because of its technical flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and ease of use. In addition, licensing costs for the solution were just one-fourth of what established 311 software vendors demanded. With help from Microsoft Gold Certified Partner 2B Solutions, the City of Birmingham implemented the solution with custom workflows that supported processes at more than 20 different divisions.

Benefits:

- Improved citizen service
- Empowered employees
- Cost-effective, solid technology



PROJECT PROBLEM

Initiative #86, from the City of Birmingham's Strategic Plan, "Evaluate and move 311 to a resident-facing department to achieve greater customer service and accessibility" served as a starting point when identifying the problem within the project.

The previous process of handling citizen requests needed to be evaluated and optimized to give citizens the best experience possible when reporting issues. The current process was not effective or efficient as it did not clearly define the responsibilities of each department. Thus cases remained open and not closed in a timely manner. It also did not have well-defined SLA to Service Level Agreements that properly explained each area of responsibility. The previous 311 application had a citizen-facing web portal allowing citizens to upload photos and documentation, but had a limited set of cases available for their use.

In addition, low service levels negatively affected the callers' perception of the 311 Call Center. The 311 Call Center should be sufficiently staffed to ensure service level goals are met and agents are productive and meeting performance measures. The 311 Call Center should also have a sufficient number of supervisory and support staff to closely monitor performance and hold agents accountable to performance metrics.

PROJECT SCOPE

Every interaction with a caller is a golden opportunity to express the City's responsiveness and concern to its customer. 311 represents every department in the City and every City employee. The manner in which service is delivered, and the willingness to serve, sets the stage for all future interaction with the City. This revamp was the opportunity for the City to do a reset and begin again.

The scope of this project was to thoroughly evaluate and document the processes and workflow to optimize and improve the communication between all departments. The project scope was to thoroughly evaluate the SLA and to break them down so that each department knows exactly what is being asked of them, and what the expected time required for completion should be. Also, the project was to identify staffing needs for each department and ensure that upper management is aware of these needs so that they can be addressed. Finally, the project focus was to maximize the existing 311 application, making it simple for the citizens to use, and provide analytical reporting to the back-office users. It needs to be responsive to the citizens, sending updates as the cases are being worked and when they are closed. It also needs to allow citizens to see cases in their area and check the status of their cases.



PROJECT TEAM

The first Core Team meeting took place on 8/7/2019. Ultimately, three teams were created:

- 311 Project Core team: representatives of IMS, 911, and Customer Service
- 311 Project Team: Core project team members plus representatives of PEP, DPW, and Transportation.
- 311 Training sub-team: Volunteers from Project Team who focused on successful delivery of the 311 training effort.



PLANNING PROCESS

- Each department, in conjunction with the Core Team, diagrammed, analyzed, and revised (as needed) their internal processes and workflows around responding to 311 cases.
- The project team updated 'due dates' for each case type and evaluated whether or not each type was assigned to the correct team. Some case types were merged, some removed, and some reassigned.
- 311 Operators reviewed a backlog of citizen calls in voicemail and created a process to ensure that this does not happen again.
- The Project Team evaluated the existing CRM web application (which the public did not have access to at that time). They recommended changes that simplified the web app, making it easier for citizens to report and track issues and request assistance from the City. In addition, functionality to attach photos had been added by the CRM vendor.
- Departments evaluated and improved their process for logging notes in CRM, which provided more visibility for citizens and 311 operators into case resolution.
- The project team sponsored a training 'kickoff' at Boutwell Auditorium to reinforce the importance of the 311 process and upcoming training. Over the course of a week, the team trained or refreshed all CRM users on the system's functionality. Project team members assisted to ensure their teams understood the functionality within the context of their jobs.
- The team recruited citizens to act as User Acceptance Testers (UAT) prior to Go Live, captured their test results for immediate action, and recorded suggestions for future reference.
- Project team members conducted their own UAT.
- Go Live took place on 11/15/2019.
- The project team continues to convene and discuss systems successes and challenges in order to maintain efficient service levels.

IMPROVEMENTS

While this revamp has not solved all of the problems, it has improved our ability to service citizens. It has also allowed us to identify points of failure and make process improvements to alleviate possible points of failure.

- Citizens can quickly enter and check on the status of cases via the portal.
- Many department users are updating and closing out cases in CRM on a more timely basis.
- The accuracy and detail of notes entered into cases by the departments have improved and will improve more as time goes by.
- The list of case types has been streamlined and important decisions have been made around which departments are responsible for which cases.
- Only certain users now have the authority to reassign a ticket.
- Calls made by citizens that go to 311 voice mail will now be addressed on a timely basis.
- Documented SLAs that include expected tasks and time of completion for each case type, broken down by each area/department of assignment.
- Evaluated and updated SLAs for each case type. This included defining expected tasks and time of completion for each case type to improve response time for handling cases.
- Improved back-office processes that now allow for citizen requests to be routed and updated quickly and efficiently. The improvement measures included extensive training for employees on the 311 system and the new business processes.
- Implemented an improved user-friendly web application. This application allows the citizens to report and track issues and request assistance.

We streamlined our operations by merging our 311 and 911 call centers. The City hired additional 311 call operators and implemented a formal operator training program to ensure the highest levels of customer service. In addition, the City's Information Management Systems has created new channels of communication with our software partners to ensure consistent support and assistance with Microsoft Dynamics if and when issues arise.



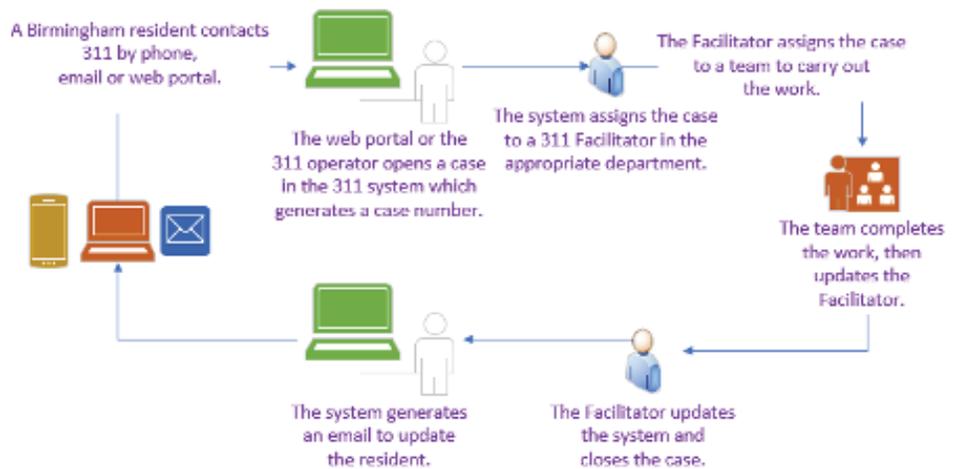
REPORTING

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Number of Cases</u>
2005	No Data
2006	No Data
2007	No Data
2008	991
2009	12981
2010	9857
2011	9048
2012	11601

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Number of Cases</u>
2013	7016
2014	13956
2015	16155
2016	14824
2017	16935
2018	30204
2019	20439
2020	15384*

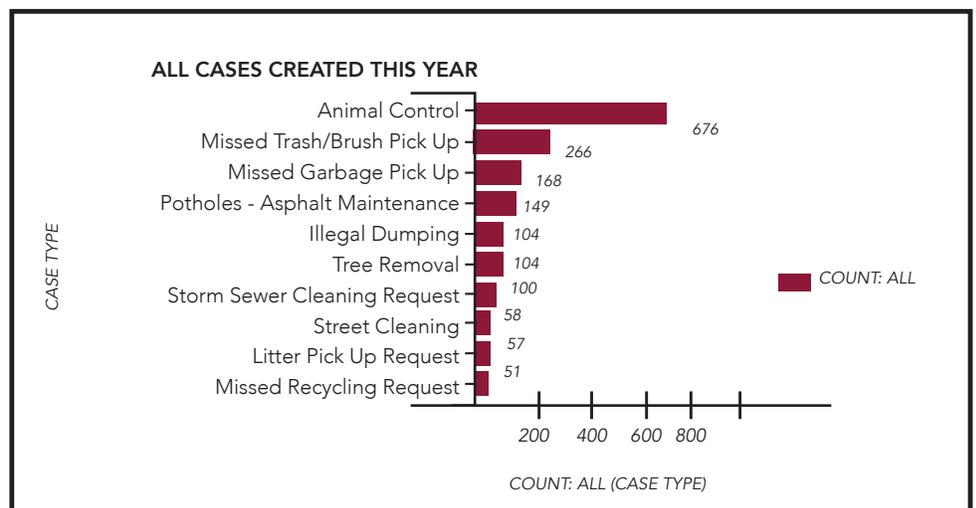
* Year to date

WORKFLOW DIAGRAM



Note: Occasionally, a case may be deferred or cancelled pending special circumstances such as completion of a related project, insufficient information provided, etc.

2020 TOP 10 CASES



CASES REPORTED NOVEMBER 2019 BY DISTRICT CASES/FREQUENCY TYPE

<u>Council District</u>	<u>Total number of cases entered CRM for November 2019</u>	<u>Most frequently requested case types for November 2019</u>
1	145	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Missed Garbage Pickup
2	162	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Missed Garbage Pickup
3	100	Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Animal Control Potholes – Asphalt Maintenance
4	214	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Missed Garbage Pickup
5	160	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Missed Garbage Pickup
6	186	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Missed Garbage Pickup
7	174	Animal Control Missed Garbage Pickup Overgrown Vacant Lot
8	171	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Overgrown Vacant Lot
9	191	Animal Control Missed Trash/Brush Pickup Overgrown Vacant Lot



Barbara W.

Crestline/Birmingham

Great service, very easy to use. Thanks City of Birmingham.

Yolanda B.

Elyton Village in Graymont

This is a very useful and powerful tool for the residents who use NextDoor. It's great to see that the residents can use this portal to bring issues to be addressed, especially when the 3-1-1 Call Center's lines are busy. I hope this service continues. This brings the City of Birmingham up a notch in advance technology, in the field of Customer Service, don't you think?

Alice B.

Belview Heights

Thanks I plan to take full advantage. Go Birmingham!

Colleen Bates Lance

Five Points South

Hello neighbors, there must have been some changes in the 311 systems for Birmingham. On November 21st I sent a message to the city about the cavernous potholes in the alley behind my house on 12th Street South in Five Points, specifically right where my driveway is. Most people who use this alleyway can avoid those potholes because they don't travel the entire length, and it is not that frequently used, except by me, and I didn't have much hope that attention would be paid to my request. However, today I saw that the potholes had been filled! So, if you have an issue you've been trying to have resolved via 311, I suggest you try again, something is going right there now.

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM RESIDENTS:

Thank you for your continued support, feedback, and patience as we ensure Birmingham remains a great place to live!